

THIS IS VFP'S
50TH ISSUE!!!

FREE

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VALLEY PRESS

THE LEHIGH VALLEY'S
GAY & LESBIAN OPINION & NEWSPAPER

VOL. 6 NO. 1

FEBRUARY 2003

LOCAL PA-GALA MEMBERS APPOINTED TO GOVERNOR'S TRANSITION COMMITTEES



2002, a terrific year for the local GLBT community, was capped off with a surprise appointment of PA-GALA Board Members Liz Bradbury and Steve Black by the Rendell Transition Team. Steve was appointed to the State Department Committee and Liz was appointed to the Higher Education Committee. Liz was a college teacher for many years and Steve's experience with PA State politics is well known, however, they were clearly appointed as representatives of the GLBT community. Congratulations PA-GALA!

GLOSS BRIDGE ROLLER SKATING



New chapter forming. All skill levels welcome. Lessons will be offered to those who are new to the game. Contact GLOSS for info.



GLOSS is having a skating party on Thursday, April 3 from 7-10pm at the Skateaway in Whitehall. For info call the GLOSS hotline: 610-434-2966 or email <info@gloss.org>.

BRUNCH N' BINGO TO BENEFIT FACT, SUNDAY, FEB 9 CLARION HOTEL,

9th & Hamilton Street, Allentown. Free parking in hotel deck, Buffet Brunch -- 11:00am - 1:30pm., Bingo -- 1:30pm - 5:30pm Board and Paper * Regular Bingo, * Novelty Games, Cash & Prizes - Door Prizes. Professional callers: Durell Shellhamer & Miss Carol Ann. Brunch only -- \$18.50, Bingo only -- \$15, Brunch & Bingo -- \$30.00. Limited seating - For Reservations call: 610-820-5519. (Please tell 'em you read about it in the VFP.)



**CAN
GAY
MEN
DONATE
BLOOD?
READ ABOUT IT
ON PAGE 7**

MCC TO HOST NFTMD CELEBRATION AND DANCE

SAT., FEB 8 5PM AT THE ICE HOUSE
SAND ISLAND, BETHLEHEM
SEE PAGE 5 FOR MORE INFO

Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley
observes

National Freedom to Marry Day

Saturday February 8, 2003
5pm to 10pm

The Ice House, Sand Island, Bethlehem, PA



T.O. TO SHOW OVOM FILM

Theatre Outlet will present OVOM's new documentary, My Trans Mission on Saturday, April 12 @ 8pm. \$12 admission includes wine & cheese reception. See more info page 3.



PRIDE FILM SCHEDULE

Pride of the Lehigh Valley's February Film Night: Saturday, February 22, 7:30pm, At UUCV - Rm. 212, 424 Center St. Theme for this month: "Celebrating African and African-American LGBT People." For more about the Pride Film schedule see page 6.



PLANET Parenthood

by Carolyn Lewis

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

One of the requirements for licensure as a Professional Counselor in the state of Pennsylvania is a graduate level course in Culture and Gender Diversity. In my opinion, it is an excellent idea to mandate that all licensed psychotherapists have at least a working familiarity of different racial, ethnic, and cultural issues, as well as an understanding of the current literature. No single person can ever be fully knowledgeable of all other cultures, but a course like this is a step in the right direction for cultural competencies. Also, it is important to learn that even families from the same cultural background will differ in how their race, gender, ethnicity, etc., affects their lives and their overall mental health.

I took the class last semester and one of the assignments was to visit a culture outside of one's own, and get immersed in it, for an hour or two even a day. I chose to attend a Ramadan celebration at the brand new Islamic Mosque (Al-Ahad Islamic Center) in Allentown. I was fortunate to be present for the very first service and it was such a positive and fulfilling experience that I wished I had brought my kids. I was very welcomed and I look forward to going back with them in the near future.

I also got to participate on the other side of the experience as well. As I had been very open in class about my family, a student approached me and asked if she could come over to my house and immerse herself in lesbian family culture for a while. I was as thrilled to help her as my Islamic friend had been to help me. I invited her over for a family Sunday dinner. I wondered what she was expecting!

The day came and we had a very pleasant dinner (vegetarian chili with mango salsa, which was excellent, if I do say so myself.) She asked us many questions about our family, how Janet and I met, how the kids handled "the lesbian thing" in school, if we had experienced any prejudice, etc. She asked some really good questions, but I was afraid we were boring!

The last part of the assignment was to share our experience in a presentation to the class. I was a bit nervous when it was her turn, because I didn't know what she was going to say. Her conclusion? We seemed like a normal family. She couldn't get over how much we laughed together. She was surprised at how happy and well adjusted we were. And she also said we opened her eyes to the prejudice that goes on every day, that she never thought of before. Our orientation, while it affects every aspect of our lives and makes some things a bit more complicated, does NOT prevent us from being a healthy, happy, normal family full of love and laughter.

How's that for a lesson learned?

ACLU FIGHTS FOR YOUTH

The American Civil Liberties Union has filed two separate suits against school officials in Kentucky and Texas, after students trying to form gay-straight alliances (GSAs) were blocked from doing so in their high schools. The ACLU charged in its suits, that preventing the students from forming GSA clubs in their schools is a violation of the federal Equal Access Act and the students' rights under the First Amendment.

"With these lawsuits we hope to put school officials on notice that we will no longer tolerate their dirty tactics and bureaucratic excuses to keep students from forming gay-straight alliances," said James Esseks, litigation director for the ACLU's Lesbian and Gay Rights Project.

Currently there are about 1,700 GSA clubs in schools across the country. So far in every case of US litigation in public schools, the schools have relented and allowed students to have the GSAs.

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RAGS TO RICHES TAKE THE FIRST STEP

by Denise McKelvey

Denise McKelvey is on vacation this month. She'll be back next month with a new Rags to Riches article.

AHRC MEMBER HIRED BY CITY

Lauren Giguere, Vice Chair of Allentown's Human Relations Commission and LCCC Administrator, has been hired as the City of Allentown's Deputy Director of the Department of Community and Economic Development. The director of the Department is Ed Pawlowski.

Lauren also is Vice President of the Hispanic Business Council and is on the Linkage Advisory Committee of the Lehigh County Conference of Churches and the board of directors of the Allentown Economic Development Corp. She supported the passage of the amendment of sexual orientation and gender identity to the city's anti-discrimination law, and supported the GLBT community's fight against the repeal of the amendment.

AVOID CREDIT THEFT

Here's some good information sent in by a VFP reader, that could protect your bank accounts and deter identity fraud.

The next time you order checks, have only your initials instead of your name put on them. If someone takes your checkbook, or if you lose it, someone would not know how you sign your name. Avoid using your home address on your checks and never have your Social Security (SS) number printed on them.

Place the contents of your wallet on a photocopy machine and copy both sides of each license, credit card, etc. You will know what you had in your wallet and all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call to cancel your cards if they are lost. Keep the photocopy in a safe place (not in your wallet!).

Immediately file a police report in the jurisdiction where your wallet was stolen. This proves to credit providers you were diligent, and is a first step toward an investigation.

Perhaps the most important thing is to call the three national credit reporting organizations immediately, to place a fraud alert on your name and SS number. Ask your bank for their phone numbers. Your information will be checked when a thief tries to make a large purchase or set up a line of credit. The alert will cause any company that checks your credit, to know your information was stolen and that they have to contact you by phone to authorize new credit. Thieves know that your information will only be good for a few days, they will work fast, so be prepared to work faster.

VALLEY STAR RETURNS

MCCLV has again started publication of their newsletter, the Valley Star. It will be quarterly, but may become more frequent in the future. Two issues have been published already. Deadlines will be the first Sunday of the month of publication. The next deadline is April 7.

Nadine Anderson is the Editor. She is aided by the capable editorial team of: Earl Beltz, Jim Ellstrom, John Hulbert, Donnie Snyder and Anthony Young and others. This project is a part of the Communication Team's ministry, headed by Earl Beltz.

The Valley Star plans to cover the activities of MCCLV, regional and national MCC activities, and other GLBTA news of interest to the Lehigh Valley church community. There will be a listing of MCCLV events and community events.

Please email press releases and announcements to Nadine Anderson at ValleyStar@att.net or mail to Valley Star, MCCLV, 1901 S. 12th Street, Room 208, Allentown, PA 18103.

HOT NEWS

GLORA SCHEDULE

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B&N GLBT BOOK CLUB

Join the Gay and Lesbian Organization of Reading and Allentown on their annual tubing/skiing event, Saturday, February 22, 5:30-10pm at Bear Creek Ski and Recreation Area in Macungie (formerly Doe Mountain). Meet at the outside ticket booth at 5:15pm. Evening ski lift tickets are \$24.00 and valid from 4-10pm, ski rental is \$19.00 and cost of tubing is \$14.00, valid 5:30-10pm. Plan to proceed to nearby Bowers Hotel afterward to warm up and for some late night munchies. Check out the Bear Creek web site at <http://skibearcreek.com> or call 610-682-7107 for the latest ski conditions.

For more information about GLORA and these events, email GLORAIAPA@aol.com or write to GLORA PO Box 1952, Allentown PA. 18105-1952.

GLOSS GAME NIGHTS

The next Gay & Lesbian Organized Sports Society game night is Feb. 15. Game Night is provided as a means for people in our community to meet, socialize and have fun in a healthy, non-threatening environment. Folks get together to play board games such as Pictionary, Risk, Monopoly, etc. If you have an old favorite that you would like to play, bring it along.

Pizza is usually ordered, so you are asked to make a \$6.00 contribution if you eat pizza and \$3 if you don't (exact change is appreciated). Drink and munchie contributions are also gladly accepted. For directions and further information call the GLOSS hotline: 610-434-2966 : or email: <info@gloss.org>.

OVOM FILM

Theatre Outlet will present OVOM's new documentary, My Trans Mission on Saturday, April 12 @ 8pm. The fictional Shawn Bausher Show is the setting for the discussion on transgender issues. Filming took place at the Theatre Outlet last fall. \$12 admission includes wine & cheese reception to follow the screening. TO is located at 29 N. 9th St., Allentown. Reservations recommended: 610-820-9270. To volunteer or purchase OVOM videos contact One Vision, One Mission at <STL327@hotmail.com>.

PRIDE FEST

The Lehigh Valley Pride Festival and parade will be Sunday, June 22. This year's International Pride Theme is "Peace Through Pride." To volunteer contact LV Pride at volunteers@pridelv.org or 610-770-6200.

The Barnes & Noble GLBT Book Club meets every month at the Whitehall store. Upcoming dates and selections: FEB 2003: Tuesday, February 18, 2003 at 7:30PM. February's title is: "The Well of Loneliness" by Radclyffe Hall, a classic of Lesbian Fiction. MAR 2003: Tuesday, March 18, 2003 at 7:00PM. March's title is: "Martin Bauman or a Sure Thing" by David Leavitt. APR 2003: meets Tuesday, April 15, 2003 at 7:00PM. The group will be selecting a title by the February meeting. Keep watch in the VFP for the announcement. B&N Store Phone: 610-821-7732.

BINGO @ DIAMONZ

Bingo @ Diamonz returns, Play Bingo every Sunday, all proceeds benefit FACT, game time 5pm. Diamonz is located at: 1913 W Broad St, Bethlehem. Phone: 610-865-1028.

AUCTION FOR FACT

Benefit Auction at Diamonz: Friday, Feb 7 at 10pm. Staff of Diamonz and customers will be auctioned off for a date. All proceeds benefit FACT (Fighting AIDS Continuously Together).

LEHIGH U. GROUPS

Lehigh University's Safe Space Committee met several times in January. A reformation of Lehigh's GLBT Student Organization, now called Spectrum (previously called GLASS), also met to discuss events of last semester.

The Safe Space Program seeks to create a welcoming community environment for all students, faculty and staff regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

For more information contact: Cecilia Stanton, Assistant Dean of Students, Office of Multicultural Affairs: 610-758-5973.

STEVIE Z APPEARANCES

StevieZ has had some health problems that have caused him to cancel this month's piano man engagements. VFP wishes Stevie all the best. Get Well Soon!

LARAMIE PROJECT

"The Laramie Project" will be showing at Northampton Community College, on Wednesday, February 5 at 1pm, Thursday, Friday & Saturday, February 6, 7, & 8 at 7pm.

CIVIL UNION BACKLASH REVERSED! VERMONT'S GROUNDBREAKING LAW APPEARS SECURE

Pro-civil union candidates posted extraordinary gains in the November 5, 2002 election, ensuring the continued vitality of Vermont's groundbreaking civil union law for at least two years, and perhaps indefinitely. The electoral backlash that swept more than a dozen pro-civil union legislators out of office in 2000 proved to be a flash in the pan, as the 2002 election almost completely reversed the losses sustained in 2000. (From PFLAG's Newsletter)

MILLERSVILLE PRESENTS VAGINA MONOLOGUES

Millersville University will be performing the Vagina Monologues on Feb. 14 and 15. PA-GALA College Intern Kate Fridirici will be part of the performance. For times and additional information please contact Kate Fridirici: aka_katie_did@yahoo.com. Profits from this event will benefit the Abused Women's Shelter in Lancaster, PA.

PFLAG LV

The PFLAG LV (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) meets monthly at Allentown's First Presbyterian Church (Cedar Crest Blvd. and Tilghman Sts.) on first Tuesdays at 7:00 pm., in Room 115. Contact: pflag@fast.net or (610) 967-5219 for more information. There are also PFLAG meetings in Reading, Pottsville and Monroe County: See the calendar on page 4 for meeting dates.

MONROE PFLAG

Monroe PFLAG has changed its meetings to the first Thursday of every month, 7:00pm. The new meeting place will be St. Paul's UCC Church in Swiftwater PA. For directions or more information please call the helpline at 570-620-1234.

LABYRINTH WALK

The non-profit organization: 7 Senses Community Services, announces FREE Labyrinth Saturdays. The purpose of the organization is to promote safe and effective use of complementary and alternative healthcare through the responsible conduct and study of all reasonable and accurate health research.

Walking a labyrinth is an ancient spiritual practice of Western culture which is an allegory for pilgrimage. 7 Senses' labyrinth is the ancient Celtic design for healing. Come to 7 senses for FREE hot tea and a FREE walk of the labyrinth. 1 pm to 7 pm, all first Saturdays of the month, 960 Broadway, Fountain Hill, 610-807-3677.

CALENDAR⁴

ACCO-A Chorus Celebrating Women, AIDS Outreach-112 N. 5th St. Allentown, PA 610.435.8424

AIDSWALK- AIDSWALK Lehigh Valley - 610.974.8701 www.regiononline.com/laids

ASC-AIDS Service Center 610.974.8701

BMA- Bucks/Montgomery Alliance for Gay and Lesbian Concerns 215-529-0360

B&N- Barnes and Noble Gay&Lesbian Book Club, White Hall store, Monthly, 7:00pm

BEARS-1st Saturdays Monthly, 8pm, at the Stonewall/Moose Lounge 610-814-6916, Mtnbear@fast.net.

CIVIC and 19th St. Theater, 527 N 19th St, 610-432-8943, <civictheater.com>

Enigma Players-- qacres@prolog.net

equal@agere- email: equal@agere.com

FACT- Fighting AIDS Continuously Together 610.820.5519

GLEEat Air Products

GLISN- at Dun & Bradstreet, <vagrathollow.com/GLISN/>

GLORA- Gay and Lesbian Organization of Reading and Allentown (Social gatherings, various dates) Newsletter- The Tassle. Write to: P.O. Box 1952, Allentown PA 18105-1952, email: GLORAI@AOL.COM

GLOSS - Gay and Lesbian Organized Sports Society, P.O.Box 21862 Lehigh Valley, PA 18002 610.434.2966.

GLSEN-Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Education Network, 610-867-6641, csbarron21@aol.com

Meetings, at 7:00 pm in rooms 108-109 of the Seeger Student Union, Muhlenberg College

GMLV- Gay Men of the Lehigh Valley, 2nd Saturdays Monthly 7pm, 610.954.7775

HAVEN GLBT Youth Group of the UUCLV - call: 610-868-215, email: havenyouthgroup@hotmail.com or zinnes@fast.net

HMFF-Hope Ministry Family Fellowship, Sundays, 11 am, Open Space Gallery, 931 Hamilton St. 610-791-0716

Integrity- Lesbian and Gay Episcopalians Family & Friends meet quarterly for fellowship and fun. 610-758-8642 or integritybeth@mindspring.com"

KS-Kindred Spirits- Support, discussion, and social group for lesbians and bisexual women

Contact: Chris at 610-868-0248, or Donna at 610.997.00607

LVGMC -Lehigh Valley Gay Men's Chorus, email: lvgmc@hotmail.com, <www.lvgmc.org> phone 610-366-3320, rehearsals: Wesley United Methodist Church, 2540 Center Street, Bethlehem

MCC - Metropolitan Community office-424 Center St. Bethlehem, 6 pm Sundays , 610.954.7775

NCC- Northampton Community College Gay Lesbian and Bisexual Student Union, call 610.861.5541/(#1386) or 882-2531

19th St/Civic Theatre - 610.432.8943

Out There- Students at CedarCrest College

OVOM-LV Documentary Film Org.

PA-GALA - PA Gay and Lesbian Alliance for Political Action, (Candidate Info Booklet, & Political Lobbying) For membership: send \$20 to: P.O.Box 20825 Lehigh Valley 18002 610.432.5449 pa-gala.org

PFLAG - LV Parents Families & Friends of Lesbians and gays, 1st Tues. 1st Pres. Church Allentown 610.967.5219 <www.users.fast.net/~pflag>

Pride- Pride of the Lehigh Valley, (Pride Festival) 610.770.6200, email: <lvpride@hotmail.com>, <www.pride.lv.org>

QuEST - Student group at Lafayette College Farion Center Box 429 Easton, PA, <QuEST_Lafayette@hotmail.com>

FEBRUARY 2003

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 WDIY BEARS GLOSS
2 Bingo HMFF UUCLV MCC GLOSS	3 RAA GLSEN	4 LVGMC GLOSS LV PFLAG	5 HAVEN	6 PFLAG M RAA ACCO GLOSS Laramie Project at NCC	7 Auction	8 MCC NTFMD Celebrate
9 Brunch N' Bingo UUCLV MCC	10 RAA	11 MCC GLOSS LVGMC	12 NTFMD HAVEN	13 ACCO RAA GLOSS	14 Vagina Monologues	15 GLOSS MCC NTFMD GLOSS Action Game Night
16 Bingo HMFF UUCLV MCC GLOSS	17 RAA	18 PFLAG R LVGMC GLOSS B&N BOOKCLUB	19 HAVEN	20 PFLAG P RAA ACCO GLOSS	21 KS	22 GLORA Pride Film Happy Travelers WDIY
23 Bingo HMFF UUCLV MCC GLOSS	24 RAA	25 MCC GLOSS	26 HAVEN	27	28 KS	29 GLOSS WDIY

MARCH 2003

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 WDIY BEARS GLOSS
2 Bingo HMFF UUCLV MCC GLOSS	3 RAA GLSEN	4 LV PFLAG LVGMC	5 HAVEN	6 PFLAG M RAA ACCO GLOSS	7	8 GLOSS
9 Bingo HMFF UUCLV MCC GLOSS	10 RAA	11 MCC GLOSS LVGMC	12 NTFMD HAVEN	13 ACCO RAA GLOSS	14 KS	15 GLOSS
16 Bingo HMFF UUCLV MCC GLOSS	17 RAA	18 PFLAG R LVGMC GLOSS B&N BOOKCLUB	19 HAVEN	20 PFLAG P RAA ACCO GLOSS	21 KS	22 Pride Film GLOSS WDIY
23 HMFF UUCLV MCC GLOSS	24 RAA	25 MCC GLOSS	26 HAVEN	27	28 KS	29 GLOSS WDIY
30 GLOSS	31					

APRIL 2003

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 GLOSS LVGMC LV PFLAG	2 HAVEN	3 GLOSS Skating PFLAG M RAA	4	5 GLOSS BEARS
6 WDIY HMFF MCC Bingo UUCLV	7 RAA	8 GLOSS MCC LVGMC	9 HAVEN	10 RAA GLOSS	11 KS	12 GMLV GLOSS
13 Bingo MCC WDIY HMFF Bingo	14 RAA	15 LVGMC GLOSS PFLAG R B&N BOOKCLUB	16 HAVEN	17 RAA GLOSS	18 KS	19 WDIY
20 MCC UUCLV Bingo	21 MCC RAA	22 GLOSS LVGMC MCC	23 HAVEN	24 RAA GLOSS PFLAG P	25 KS	26 WDIY GLOSS Game Night
27 WDIY Bingo MCC UUCLV HMFF	28 RAA	29 GLOSS LVGMC	30 HAVEN			

Quakers-Lehigh Valley Friends Meeting-Rose
512 1/2 mi. North of Rte 22 Bethlehem, PA.
Worship at 9:30 am. (610)691-3411.
RAA- Rainbow AA meetings, Mon. & Thurs.
Episcopal Church, 16th & Turner Atnw.
Ren- Renaissance Transgendered Assoc.,
P.O.Box 157 Trexlertown 18087 - 610-814-
0530/0531

Rainbow Space - Muhlenberg College
Organization 610.821.3244

Reading P-FLAG- 610.488.7533 or 670.8029

Safe Space- At Lehigh U. 610.758.5973

Saint John's Lutheran Church- A welcoming,
gay affirming church, 32 S. 5th St. Allentown
610.435.1587

Softball- (Women's) call Diamonz, 610.865.1028

Spectrum- at Lehigh Univ. 610.758.5973

T.O. - Theatre Outlet- 29 Nth 9th St, Allentown,
610-820-9270.

Unity- 26 N. 3rd St. Emmaus, 767-4417

UUCV- Unitarian Universalist Church LV, 424
Center St., Bethlehem, 18018 610.866.7652.

VFP - Valley Free Press, 610.432.5449,
liztrish@aol.com

VYH - Valley Youth House for emotionally
troubled GLBT youth 610.432.6481

WDIY - WDIY - 88.1 fm 93.9 fm Saturday 7:00 pm
This Way Out, Assorted Women 7:30 pm. 610-
694-8100.88.

SPECIAL UPCOMING EVENTS:

FACT BINGO @ DIAMONZ
- SUNDAYS

GLBT YOUTH GROUP

HAVEN - WEDNESDAYS

LV BEARS - 1ST SATURDAYS

GAY MEN-LV - 2ND SATURDAYS

LV PFLAG - 1ST TUESDAYS

MONROE PFLAG - 1ST THURSDAYS

READING - PFLAG 3RD TUESDAYS

POTTSVILLE PFLAG

- 3RD THURSDAYS

GLOSS VOLLEYBALL - TUESDAYS

GLOSS TENNIS - SUNDAYS

GLOSS RACQUETBALL - TUES & SATS

MCC BOOK STUDY 2ND & 4TH TUES

KINDRED SPIRITS

- ALL FRIDAYS EXCEPT THE 1ST

LV PFLAG - FEB 4

LARAMIE PROJ. @NCC - FEB 5-8

MONROE PFLAG - FEB 6

AUCTION @ DIAMONZ - FEB 7

MCC NFTMD @ SAND ISLAND

FEB 8

FACT BRUNCH N' BINGO

FEB 9

MCC BOOK STUDY - FEB 11

VAGINA MONOLOGUES @

MILLERSVILLE - FEB 14 - 15

MCC NFTMD ACTION - FEB 14

GLOSS GAME NIGHT - FEB 15

FEB 18 - B&N BOOKCLUB

GLORIA TUBING/SKIING - FEB 22

PRIDE FILM NIGHT - FEB 22

HAPPY TRAVELERS - FEB 22

MCC BOOK STUDY - FEB 24

GLOSS GAME NIGHT - MAR 15

B&N BOOKCLUB - MAR 18

PRIDE FILM NIGHT - MAR 22

GLOSS ROLLER SKATING - APR 3

PRIDE / FACT FILM - APR 6

OVOM FILM @ TO - APR 12

B&N BOOKCLUB - APR 15

GLOSS GAME NIGHT - APR 26

LV PRIDE FEST - JUNE 22

INFORMATION

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

CALL TO CONFIRM!

TO POST INFO:

610-432-5449 EMAIL:

LIZTRISH@AOL.COM

MCC DOES NFTMD

(Continued From Page 1)

The Metropolitan Community Church National Freedom to Marry Day(NFTMD) event planned for Saturday, February 8, at the Ice House on Sand Island in Bethlehem, combines a blessing of all relationships and a special same sex-marriage ceremony.

This is the third annual major NFTMD event MCCLV has celebrated for this important GLBT community holiday. This year, MCC has gone even farther to recognize and create awareness of the discrimination suffered by our community every day, because our relationships are not legally recognized. MCC states that this important event is:

-----An MCCLV ceremony promoting same-sex marriage rights.

-----A community celebration of God's blessing.

-----A public affirmation of love and commitment.

-----An awareness of the political fight for legal recognition.

The ceremony will be interfaith in terms of the participating clergy with varying religious affiliations. Following the ceremony will be a reception and dance.

Whether you wish to: participate in the blessing ceremony, be a witness to this affirmation, or just hit the dance floor in celebration of the GLBT community, come out and be a part of this event. Both the ceremony and dance are free of charge and all are welcome. For further info: email mcclehighvalley@yahoo.com or call the church office at 610-709-8800.

MCC RAISES AWARENESS

MCCLV's group, Infiltrators for Jesus, will join with MCCs across the nation to raise awareness about the need to legalize same-sex marriages. At noon on Friday, February 14 they will be at the Northampton County Courthouse, bringing attention to the need for equality in marriage. To participate, please call 610-709-8800 or e-mail <infiltratorsforjesus@yahoo.com>.



CIVIL UNION ANNOUNCEMENTS

To have your Vermont Civil Union listed here, or to get more information on how to get a Vermont Civil Union, email VFP at: <liztrish@aol.com>.

FROM THE: "WHO SAYS THINGS CAN'T CHANGE" DEPARTMENT

In 1959, Rev. Dr. Elder Troy Perry, founder of Metropolitan Community Churches, was expelled from Midwest Bible College in Chicago for being gay. This year, in the same city, Perry, was named to the board of trustees of the Chicago Theological Seminary.

MCC BOOK STUDY & ACTIVISM

The Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley group Infiltrators for Jesus meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. They are sponsoring another book study starting this January. The selected book is "Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America" by MCC Pastor Mel White (former ghostwriter for Jerry Falwell and others).

Meetings in February will be at the church on the 11th at 7 p.m. and the 24th at 7 p.m. Contact infiltratorsforjesus@yahoo.com for further information.

RANTS & RAVES BY STEPHEN T. LIBBY



It's the time of year to acknowledge those entertainers who um...entertained us over the past 12 months.

For excellence in music (video form) "Beautiful," Christina Aguilera's gender bending, same-sex kissing, celebration of the usually ridiculed and stigmatized. I don't care where she's pierced! And former boy band member goes solo and gains even more gay fans in the process. Appears on the cover of the Advocate, but alas, does not come out...yet. My boyfriend would like everyone to pray that Justin Timberlake can avoid the tabloid clouds that followed his predecessors, George Michael and Michael Jackson. Everyone say Amen.

I saw many gay films on video and in the theaters this year. Some were fun (Kissing Jessica Stein, Speedway Junkies, Hit, Runway) others dramatic (Circuit, The Fluffer) but none were as sweeping or daring as Todd Haynes homage to 50's melodramas, Far From Heaven. It was the black (pink) sheep that boasted 4 of the year's best performances. Add to that the lesbi-erotic The Hours and Frida, the over the top homoerotic tension in TLOTRs: Two Towers, the fun titled Igby Goes Down (not what you think), Queen Latifah in Chicago, and the return of Leonardo DiCaprio and director Pedro Almodovar and you have one of the gayest movie seasons in recent history.

Television dropped 9 recurring GLBT characters from last year. Have no fear, seven of them can be found any given week night on the new Hollywood (Queers?) Squares. WG, QAF, OZ, MTV HGTV are the leading GLBT acronyms on TV. The Shield, ER, Six Feet Under, Buffy and others still feature GLBT storylines. TV is NOT homophobic and to prove it; when quizzed by Mary Har regarding his gay male fans, Evan? Joe Millionaire? Marriottaka responded "Rock on! It's nothing but positive for me." Now why can't Trent Lott feel that way?

Next month: "What the Freak Were They Thinking?" Till then: the must see list includes those mentioned above as well as, Talk to Her, The Pianist, and (for fun) Just Married.

What's That About?

6



Readers write or email "What's That About?" editors with questions about gay and lesbian issues.



This month several men, who were turned away from donating blood because they were gay, wrote to WTA with questions and concerns. See page 7 for a detailed response.

Dear VFP: This month MCC is doing a civil action effort for National Freedom to Marry Day. They are going to publicly apply for marriage licences for same-sex couples. Since PA already has a law prohibiting same-sex marriage, is there anything illegal about applying for a licence? **Signed: Going to the Chapel**

Dear GTTC: There shouldn't be any danger. After all, all the clerk has to do is tell you no. But just to be sure we checked with Attn. Dan Anders of Pepper Hamilton LLP. Dan says: "...Briefly, I think you're okay just applying and truthfully answering any questions. The application may ask you to list 'any other facts necessary to determine whether a legal impediment to the proposed marriage exists.' I suggest that you answer that question by stating that the applicants are both women or both men."

VFP reminds everyone that this is not an attempt to bring a legal suit for same-sex marriage. It is an action to bring awareness to the lack of equality for GLB people. VFP applauds MCC for its efforts.

VFP has now confirmed that Northampton Community College gives same-sex domestic partner benefits to faculty and staff and has been doing so for a year. LCCC only gives DP Benefits to opposite sex (common law) couples. They say a reason they don't give them to same-sex couples is because no one has asked.

This month VFP had another email from someone who works for Domino's. He sent us the anti-discrimination policy from the employee handbook and feels that Queen City Pizza (the owner of most of the local Domino's franchise stores) does not aim to discriminate against gay people. Here is our response.

Dear D & QCP Employee: I appreciate the (anti-discrimination) statement you just sent me from Domino's. Frankly, it is a classic dodge. It says: "All employment decisions, policies and practices are made in accordance with applicable federal, state and local anti-discrimination laws. We will not engage in or tolerate unlawful discrimination in any manner or form whatsoever. Anyone who discriminates unlawfully (including any form of unlawful harassment) against a person..." (underlined by VFP)

All Domino's is saying is: We will not discriminate against anyone in places where it is illegal to discriminate against them. That really is just reiterating any existing law. While it looks like an anti-discrimination statement, it is not. There are no federal or state (lawful) protections for people based on sexual orientation or gender identity. And locally, only Allentown has municipal employment protection for GLBT people.

If you feel strongly that Queen City Pizza is not anti-GLBT, then they probably aren't. Maybe they'll change the wording in their policy if someone asks them. I'll ask them. I won't mention you. They may not even know they are not protecting GLBT people, because they probably don't know (as most people don't) that GLBT people aren't already protected by federal or state law. If they change their policy, I will personally call up HRC and tell them to add Queen City Pizza to the list of companies that have anti-discrimination policies and I'll write about it in the VFP.

Thanks for your input. I'm really not kidding about calling them. Just tell me who to call. **Liz Bradbury**
("We now have a call in to Queen City Pizza, but as yet have not been able to talk to an upper level management person. Stay tuned to the next VFP for more on this issue.")

SCOTT SAYS

By Scott Laubner



THE HAPPY TRAVELERS RIDE AGAIN

On Feb. 22, the Happy Travelers are gathering at the Colonial House at 131 Howertown Road in Catasauqua. The Happy Travelers are a very loosely organized group and all are invited. Dinner starts at 6:00pm but you are welcome to come out for just a smart cocktail and a discrete hors d'oeuvre if you would prefer. If you are interested in attending for dinner email me at scottlaubner@yahoo.com so I can keep a rough headcount.

Directions from Route 22: Take 22 to Airport Road North, at Race Street go left, at D&D Market (on right side) go right onto Pineapple Street (this is an alley). Go to the end and park in the gravel lot on the right side. The restaurant is on the left corner. You can enter the restaurant on the side. The restaurant phone # is 610-264-0861.

Chipmunk readers, don't miss the chance to meet up with other good folks.

PRIDE FILM SCHEDULE

Continued from page 1.

The LV Pride Film Committee has begun a monthly film festival. All films listed here will be at UUCLV, 424 Center St. Bethlehem at 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

February Film Night, Saturday, February 22. Film: "Dakan." Made in 1997, it is the first feature film on homosexuality to come out of sub-Saharan, Africa. A controversial gay theme surrounding a Romeo and Juliet type story, in French and Malinke with English subtitles. Admission: \$7.00, (\$5.00 students, w/ ID)

March Film Night: Saturday, March, 22. Film: Golden Threads, \$6.00, (\$4.00 students, w/ ID). When a lesbian networking service returns 72 year old Christine Burton's application and check with a note saying, "Have you made a mistake about your date of birth? Nobody wants to meet lesbians older than 50," Burton turns rejection into inspiration and launches Golden Threads a quarterly newsletter connecting more than 1,600 women worldwide.

April Film Night *Co-Sponsored with and will also benefit FACT. Sunday, April 6. (additional info TBA). Film, "Sordid Lives." A "black comedy" about a dysfunctional family. For more information contact Pride or the Film Committee at: <FilmFestival@pridelv.org> or <www.pridelv.org>.

NEW MCC IN WILKES BARRE

A Metropolitan Community Church is starting in Wilkes Barre, PA. The Startup Team had a group dinner in January. For more information email info@wvmcc.org or call Rev. David Hall at 570-826-9872 or Rev. Robert Wright at 823-5207. For directions to the church see their website at <<http://www.wvmcc.org>>.

MCC LEHIGH VALLEY NOW OFFERS TWO SERVICES...

a 10:30 am morning service and a 6 pm evening service. The address of the new church is: 1901 South 12th St. at 12th and Vultee (Just off Lehigh St. near Rt. 78), Allentown.

FOR LEGAL INFO ON 2ND PARENT ADOPTION

For information on 2nd parent adoption or if your lawyer has questions call The Center for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights in Philadelphia toll free at 1-866-LGBT-LAW.

Valley Free Press does not discriminate on the bases listed in the anti-discrimination statement on page 8, and asks that organizations or individuals which request VFP to publish information about their events maintain a similar policy.



A VIEW FROM A DYKE 7

WHY DON'T THEY WANT YOUR BLOOD?

By Liz Bradbury

Whose blood would you rather be transfused with; (A) A gay man's whose blood absolutely tested negative for all sexually transmitted diseases and other contaminations or (B) a straight person's who had no idea whether or not they had HIV? According to the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), B is safer than A. Do they have a good reason why? No, they don't.

Local Blood Donor Centers must comply with the FDA policies. If they don't, they are breaking the law. Blame the Federal Government for these discriminatory rules.

I talked to Dr. Kip Kutner at Miller Memorial Blood Center at length about blood donor regulations.

Fact: Every blood donation is thoroughly screened for everything from Hepatitis to West Nile Virus. There are three HIV/AIDS tests. But on extremely rare occasions contaminated blood slips through.

Fact: Questionnaires and interviews are also used to screen.

The donor questionnaire is long, and though Dr. Kutner read parts to me, I wanted to see a copy. Yet at the FDA website the questionnaire is impossible to find. Finally a research librarian was able to find me the guidelines for the FDA questions on the American Red Cross website. After reading them, it seemed clear that the FDA limits public access to the questionnaire because parts of it are embarrassingly stupid, not to mention homophobic and racist.

For example, while it makes sense to exclude people who have recently had malaria, or who have had syphilis in the last year, it is ridiculous to exclude a man only because he had sex with another man even once since 1977, (a period of twenty-five years!).

The questionnaire does not ask if the donor has had multiple sex partners, but it does say that if you have paid for sex in the last year you can't give. In other words, it's OK if you've had a bunch of partners, or used prostitutes for 24 of the last 25 years, but if in 1977 you had one gay sexual encounter, you are condemned to never give blood, even if you have tested HIV/AIDS negative for 20 years.

FACT: In 1997 and 2001, medical officials asked the FDA to change the exclusion period of gay men from 25 years to one year, because a one year window would allow for necessary testing clearance. But the FDA opted to ignore them.

By the way, "anyone who was born in, or who lived in, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Niger, or Nigeria since 1977 may not give blood." Read between the lines...this is racist.

Although there is a high rate of HIV infection in those countries, YOU CANNOT GET HIV/AIDS WITHOUT DIRECT EXPOSURE TO HIV/AIDS INFECTED BODILY FLUIDS. Why can't people from those African countries, (or gay men,) be relied upon to know whether or not they have been exposed to contaminated bodily fluids? Why not just ask all potential blood donors if they have had unprotected anal or vaginal intercourse with someone whose sexual history was unknown to them? Why is it that straight people are allowed to determine if their behavior is risky, but gay men and people from Africa are not? Why is it that a gay man or someone from Africa, who has tested negative for HIV/AIDS, still can't ever give blood? Homophobia and racism? Clearly!

I'm not saying the FDA should let people who are infected give blood. Just that all people who have altruistically chosen to give blood (without remuneration) to save people's lives, who know they are not at risk for infection should be allowed to give blood, regardless of their sexual orientation or country of origin.

So what do we do about it? 1. As individuals or organizations, write to the FDA and tell them it is time to change this antiquated policy which unfairly stigmatizes gay men and Africans. 2. Encourage pro-tolerance health organizations to present the FDA with data showing that their current questionnaire is counter-productive and discriminatory. Email the FDA at: BAP@CBFER.FDA.GOV. This is the Blood Action Plan group of the FDA. For an electronic copy of this article to include with your message, contact me at: <liztrish@aol.com>.



TRISH'S COLUMN

By Patricia Sullivan

IN HONOR OF NTFMD... OR... MY DAUGHTER THE AX MURDERER

In 1968, my friends Nancy and Bobby got married. It was one of those perfect church weddings with the bride in a long white dress and veil and the groom in a tuxedo. The bride's twin brother "gave her away" and both sides of the aisle were filled with family and friends. Last year I went to a big Italian wedding at a local hotel replete with Sinatra recordings. It was one of the most beautiful and moving weddings I have ever attended. Just like at Nancy and Bobby's wedding both sides of the aisle were filled with relatives, friends and coworkers. The couples who married in these two weddings were very special and very brave. And though they are separated by about 34 years, they have a lot in common.

What is it about parents that if someone told them their daughter was an ax murderer they would defend their daughter to the death. Picture this: Daughter covered with blood, holding an ax. Mom: "She's no murderer. She was only...um... emulating Martha Stewart and...um... butchering a pig so that she could make her own maple cured smoked bacon!" Isn't that always the case with parents when their child commits a crime?

But when a highly intelligent, socially responsible and respected adult woman chooses to marry, well, to marry someone "different" some parents just forget that this is the same daughter they would defend as an ax murderer. And that is just what happened in each of these two weddings.

In 1968 Nancy's mother refused to attend her wedding because Nancy was white and Bobby was black. Bobby's mother, who didn't approve of interracial marriages did attend, because as she put it: "Bobby's my only son and I'm not letting anything come between us." At the time I didn't think much about it, but after all, it wasn't until 1967 that interracial marriages were legal in the United States. And even though interracial marriages were legal in 1968, there was a lot of prejudice and discrimination ahead for anyone who chose to marry someone of another race.

Needless to say, the Italian wedding was a same-sex marriage ceremony. Two brides, no grooms. And once again, one Mom did not attend. As I sat through the ceremony I thought about how really brave our friend was. How she, like Nancy in 1968, had been true to herself and had probably said, "I love you Mom, but I'm a big girl now and I am responsible for the life I live." I thought about how much it must have hurt both these women on the day when they choose to commit the rest of their lives to the person they loved, that someone so dear to them would be so selfish as to purposely mar the occasion with their absence. And how sad too for the Moms who will never share that important moment in their daughters lives. I felt very sad for a moment, but only a moment, because I realized that these women were two of the bravest women I knew. They faced adversity of the most personal nature and rose above it. They brought to their relationships character, commitment and personal insight that will serve to strengthen and maintain their lives together. I know this has been true for Nancy and Bobby. And I believe it will be true for this other couple as well.

It is often said that you don't really become an adult until your parents have died. If this is true, then I believe it is a sign of great maturity to be able to be true to yourself as an adult despite the existence of your parents.

NY PASSES EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

In December 2002, thirty-one years after the first gay rights bill was introduced in Albany, New York's Governor signed into law a bill extending civil rights protections to gays and lesbians in the state. An amendment to add transgender protections was voted down by the Republican controlled Senate. With NY, NJ and MD all having these laws, PA is now almost surrounded.

POP QUIZ

8

- Sponge Bob's best friend is:
A. Squidward B. Patrick C. Mr Krab D. Sandy
- One of Sponge Bob's favorite games is:
A. Escalators & Eels B. Clamopoly
C. Yatchsee D. Sunken Battleship
- Sponge Bob's pet snail is named:
A. Swirly B. Spot C. William D. Gary
- Squidward's last name is: A. Octopod
B. Tentacles C. Roe D. G. Robinson
- Sponge Bob lives in: A. Bikini Bottom
B. Sunova Beach C. OK Coral D. Krusty Korners
- Before Harry Potter learned he was going to Hogwarts, he was set to go to ___ High School.
A. Stonewall B. Diamonds C. Rainbow Mt. D. Gaylan
- Which state/s explicitly exclude same-sex partners from their domestic violence laws?
A. Montana B. Delaware C. Utah D. So. Carolina
- According to the ACLU, about how many High School Gay/StraightAlliances are there in the US?
A. 500 B. 950 C. 1300 D. 1700
- Which of these states would be the least likely to grant a second parent adoption to a lesbian mother?
A. Virginia B. Georgia C. Maine D. Alabama
- Which three states explicitly forbid all adoption by gay parents?
A. Florida, Mississippi and Utah

QUOTE #6

"The contributions that Mr.(Bayard) Rustin made aren't just to civil rights," said Board President Rogers Vaughn, "but to the whole United States." --Westchester School Board Pres. Rogers Vaughn, on the (6-3) vote to name a High School after Civil Rights Activist Rustin. Nay voters objected to Rustin because he was gay and a conscientious objector.

We believe it would improve the quality of life in the Lehigh Valley if all people were equally protected from unfair discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry or place of birth, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, family status, age, disability or use of a guide animal, in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodation.

PA-GALA

Valley Free Press

Allentown Human Relations Commission

Safe-Space of Lehigh University

FFLAG Lehigh Valley

ACCO - A Chorus Celebrating Women

GLORA

Pride of the LV

LV Gay Men's Chorus

NCC GLBT Student Union

The Lehigh Valley Labor Party

EQUAL at Agere

Metropolitan Community Church LV

OutThere - Cedar Crest

9th Street Shelter Allentown

LV Community Action Committee

GLEE at Air Products

FACT

AIDS Outreach

The Unitarian Universalist Church LV

GLOSS

LEPOCO

GLSN of Dun & Bradstreet

AIDS Services Center

Theatre Outlet

Integrity - Bethlehem

The Lehigh Valley Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Civic Theater 19th Street Theatre

The Latin Alliance

The Enigma Players

New Covenant Family Ministries

Properties of Merit

Allentown City Democratic Committee

Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem

Puerto Rican Cultural Alliance

To add your organization to this list, call 610-432-5449 or email VFP (litrish@aol.com).

QUOTE #1

"The intent of my proclamation was to be true to myself." -- Fayetteville, Ark. UUC Minister Rhett D. Bair, upon his declaration that he will not sign marriage licenses for heterosexual couples because the state does not grant that right to same-sex couples.

QUOTE #2

"...Do something positive. Do something constructive... Give money to a charity. Give money to the people that fight for civil rights. Volunteer. Speak up when you hear somebody saying something negative. If you are gay or lesbian, you can come out." -- Allyson Hamm from her speech at UUCLV about constructively "fighting" hate groups like Fred Phelps' Westboro Baptist Church

QUOTE #3

"...(A Manager of a Philadelphia B&N Bookstore) asked if I had written a book. In response to my affirmative reply, she asked what the title was. Very slowly I told her the entire title. Immediately a surprised and delighted burst of laughter erupted from her lips. She quickly clamped her hand over her mouth and said, 'I'm sorry. You just don't look like a person who would be interested in that subject.' 'I know,' I replied..." -- 75 year old local activist and author Roberta Krieder on her book of collected stories, "Together in Love," that celebrates GLBT couples and their religious faith

QUOTE #4

"From my view, if you really read all the evidence, you really have a hard time finding an argument against same-sex marriage." -- Rep. Michael Lawlor, D-West Haven, Co-Chair of a Connecticut Assembly Committee that found giving gay couples the right to marry would not cost the state money and might instead increase state tax revenues

QUOTE #5

"Lesbians will have children, as long as there is a live maternal instinct and a nearby fertility clinic. Gay men will adopt. All that the Virginia courts can achieve by standing firm is to drive them out of the state." -- From a Jan. 3 Washington Post Editorial about Virginia's refusal to grant second parent adoptions

Distelfink 2/03 "You don't exist because we say so" by Ruby Zebu

The Vatican says it won't recognize sex change operations. But it also says people who have them, can't marry or enter religious life.



So they do recognize them, but only enough to discriminate against them.

and the Pope says our families are "inauthentic" too... They must still be really sore that most people didn't buy blaming gays for the priest--pedophile thing.

The editorial columns and political cartoon that appear in Valley Free Press express the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or attitude of this publication. VFP makes no indication of the sexual orientation of persons, organizations, or businesses mentioned in any issue.

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